

## Thankful for military sacrifices

**By Susan A. Davis**

San Diego's military community helps define our region, and Memorial Day is a time to be especially mindful of the sacrifices we as a nation place on our men and women in uniform and their families.

For me, this was highlighted during a trip earlier this month to Qatar, Afghanistan and Germany as part of a congressional delegation that focused on addressing the needs of our troops. We incorporated the lessons we learned there – and what our men and women told us they needed – in this year's bipartisan defense authorization bill, which passed the U.S. House of Representatives last week.

Flying over the austere landscape of Kandahar, Qalat and Kabul, I was aware more than ever of the great sacrifice made by service members who are deployed overseas, away from their families. As a member of the House Armed Services Committee, I frequently hear that deployments are measured not in months and years, but by the special occasions missed. The fact that we were visiting over Mother's Day heightened the reality that for the mothers serving in Afghanistan there were no Sunday brunches or hugs from their children on their day. Some of these brave women were members of female engagement teams, trained at Camp Pendleton, who are assigned to front-line units and

Flying over the austere landscape of Kandahar, Qalat and Kabul, I was aware more than ever of the great sacrifice made by service members who are deployed overseas, away from their families.

service members. It is always a moving experience to talk to our wounded warriors and convey our profound thanks for their service and sacrifice. Their experiences, insight, and spirit are with me this Memorial Day.

visit rural villages to win the trust and cooperation of local women.

These women told us that they believe their presence in Afghanistan is in our national security interest. They fight for our collective security while thinking about their children, who are the true reason why they do what they do. I was humbled by their service and dedication to their country.

This sentiment was intensified when we concluded our trip, as I have before, with a visit to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany to visit with our recently injured

It's because of the sacrifices made by the men and women like those I met on my trip that we work so hard in Washington to provide for our all-volunteer force. This Congress has taken huge strides to take care of our military and their families and ensure those in harm's way have the support they need. This year's defense bill stays that course. As chairwoman of the Personnel Subcommittee, I worked hard to include a 1.9 percent pay raise, which will further reduce the gap between military and private sector pay raises. The bill allows TRICARE beneficiaries to extend health care coverage to dependent children up to age 26, just like the new health care reform law now allows. It also authorizes \$50 million in the Department of Defense Impact Aid program to help support school districts such as San Diego Unified and Colorado.

Congress remains focused on providing for those who serve.

This Memorial Day, we should all take some time to think of the men and women in uniform and their families who sacrifice so much. San Diego and the rest of our country are better off for their continued dedication to our nation.

---

**Davis**, a Democrat, represents the 53rd Congressional District, which includes Imperial Beach, coastal and central portions of San Diego, Lemon Grove and La Presa.